

A Spy Stays Out in the Cold

James Angleton is
no longer with the Company,
but he keeps his hand in

GRG1 American Security
Council

~~GRG1 Security &
Intelligence Fund~~
CIA-01 Colby, Wm.

(orig under Stein)

by Jeff Stein

It was the kind of afternoon in Washington, D.C., when the city seems to have turned into the capital of a banana republic. Rumors of another coup in the higher levels of government swept out of the press rooms, across Capitol Hill and into the restaurants and bars last week. There had been reports that the deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency and 20 other top operatives in the CIA's Clandestine Services Branch had been purged.

Working on the telephone in a quiet corridor of a private club two blocks from the White House, James Angleton — one of the agency's most feared men for 31 years and its counter-intelligence chief until 1975 — was trying to find out what had happened. He looked grim.

"I'm told that the reporter is reliable," he said a few minutes later, slipping into a chair in the Army-Navy Club's cocktail lounge and pulling a photostat of the original UPI story from his breast pocket. "If it's true, and if no cause is shown, no cause that is satisfactory to the cadres, then it'll be damaging, very damaging."

The reported purge began to stir the old man's memories of a similar day in the spring of 1975, when he himself had been unceremoniously dumped after the appearance of a series of newspaper reports describing his role as the head of a massive spying operation directed at American citizens. Two years later, the memory was still a bitter one.

"I'm still decompressing, and will be

for some time," he said, lighting the first of the 18 Virginia Slims he would smoke during the next two-and-a-half hours. His firing he says, was "a complete pulling of the rug, and what emerged in the next couple months was the deceptions they had worked upon us, and lies — and to have that from your own people is a little difficult to swallow."

There were widespread reports that Angleton had not really been ousted because of the domestic-intelligence controversy, but because he had built up too powerful an empire within the CIA and had quietly warred against the Nixon-Kissinger strategy of detente with the USSR.

"Don't ask me that question, because I have too many stories to tell and too many statements to make with people who knew about many meetings which I never knew," he said with uncharacteristic sharpness. "And some day I'll write about that last meeting I had with Colby." Former CIA Director William Colby (who would himself be fired by President Ford in 1976) told him, Angleton says, that the domestic spying flap would blow over in a couple of days, that Ford would simply be informed the program had ended. Angleton would have to go, of course, but it would be handled delicately. It didn't happen that way. Angleton's wife heard about her husband's fate on the radio.

"Should I write a book someday," Angleton continued, reaching for his rum punch, "it would not be what I call a diagonal nod. You know what I mean by that? I mean, it's not belly-to-belly with the KGB this time. The book would be to advance the cause."

He calls it a cause. But others in or close to the intelligence community see it as James Angleton's hand reaching back from the grave. "He is a time bomb," said one agent who understandably asked that his name not be used. "He knows who did what when."

Angleton's current base of operations is in the offices of the American Security Council, where he has formed the "Security and Intelligence Fund," an organization of former high-ranking military and intelligence officers put together to defend FBI and CIA agents accused by prosecutors of illegal wiretapping, mail intercepts and break-ins. Angleton is the Fund's chairman, former US ambassador to South Vietnam Elbridge Dubrow its president, and Brigadier General (ret.) Robert C. Richardson its secretary-treasurer. Board members include several former agents of the CIA and OSS (the forerunner of the CIA), as well as ex-US Senator George Murphy and former TV reporter Nancy Dickerson.

A fundraising pitch by the group complains that things are "upside down now" with the Carter administration "hiring anti-Vietnam activists who only yesterday were open adversaries of the Department of Justice, the FBI, the military, even the government itself." It warns that "the CIA and FBI have been so badly shattered that they no longer have adequate internal security."